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(54) f θ lens and image forming apparatus using the same.

(57) This specification discloses an f θ lens acting to effect uniform speed scanning while causing a light beam deflected at a uniform angular velocity by the deflecting surface of a deflector to be imaged on a plane to be scanned, wherein the shape of the curved surface of at least the lens surface of the lens which is adjacent to the deflection point side of the deflecting surface in the main scanning plane is an aspherical shape and particularly, near the optical axis, in at least the main scanning plane, this aspherical shape is convex toward the deflection point, and when the radius of curvature of this convex shape near the optical axis in the main scanning plane is r_1 and the focal length of the f θ lens near the optical axis in the main scanning plane is f_m ,

$$0 \leq r_1 < |f_m|$$

and yet, when with the point of intersection between the lens surface adjacent to the deflection point side and the optical axis as the origin and with the coordinates system of the x-axis plotted in the direction of the optical axis and the coordinates system of the y-axis plotted in the main scanning plane perpendicularly thereto, the surface shape in the main scanning plane is expressed as a function $S_1(y)$ in which y is a variable, and when the maximum effective diameter of this surface in the main scanning plane is Y_{max} , $S_1(y)$ is defined between 0 and Y_{max} , and when $r_1 < Y_{max}$,

$$-1 < S_1(r_1)/r_1 < 0.5$$

and when $r_1 \geq Y_{max}$,

$$-1 \times Y_{max}/r_1 < S_1(Y_{max})/Y_{max} < 0.5 \times Y_{max}/r_1.$$

The specification also discloses an image forming apparatus using such f θ lens.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTIONField of the Invention

5 This invention relates to an $f\theta$ lens used in a laser scanning optical system or the like, and particularly to an $f\theta$ lens comprised of a lens and an image forming apparatus using the same.

Related Background Art

10 Heretofore, in a scanning optical system, chiefly a laser source such as a semiconductor laser has been used as a light source and light from the light source has been imaged on a plane to be scanned through an optical system to thereby form a laser spot, and the laser source has been subjected to modulation conforming to image information while the laser spot is scanned on the plane to be scanned by a deflector such as a polygon mirror disposed in the optical path, whereby a desired image has been formed on the
15 plane to be scanned.

Where such a laser scanning optical system is particularly an optical system which scans a laser by the rotation of a deflector such as a polygon mirror, it is desirable that a laser spot be uniformly formed on the whole plane to be scanned (that is, the curvature of image field of a lens system be corrected) and the angle of rotation of the deflector and the position of the spot formed on the plane to be scanned have a
20 proportional relation (that is, the speed of the spot scanned on the plane to be scanned become constant on the whole plane to be scanned, i.e., have constant speed property.). For this purpose, a correcting optical system is used between the polygon mirror and the plane to be scanned. Usually, this lens for correction used in the laser scanning system is a lens called an $f\theta$ lens having such a distortion characteristic that the angle of incident light and the image height are in a proportional relation, so as to have constant speed
25 property.

Further, even where a mirror surface which is the deflecting surface of the deflector has an inclination, it is regarded as desirable from the viewpoints of the manufacture of the deflector and the quality of image to have optical correcting means so that the position of the scanning line may not deviate (inclination correcting function).

30 There have been made numerous inventions relating to an $f\theta$ lens having such inclination correcting function. Particularly, regarding a type in which the number of constituent lenses is two or more, many inventions have been made and put into practical use.

In contrast, several $f\theta$ lenses in which the lens system is constructed of a lens have also been devised as simpler optical systems.

35 As seen, for example, in Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application Nos. 55-7727 and 58-5706, there is an example in which an $f\theta$ lens is comprised of a spherical lens.

Also, like Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application Nos. 63-50812 and 1-224721, there is an example in which a toric surface is used as a lens surface and yet an $f\theta$ lens is constructed.

Further, in Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application Nos. 54-87540 and 54-98627, there is disclosed an
40 example in which an aspherical surface term is introduced into a single lens, and in Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application Nos. 62-138823, 63-157122 and 2-87109, there is disclosed an example in which a high-order aspherical surface is introduced into a lens surface to thereby construct an $f\theta$ lens.

However, in the plano-convex $f\theta$ lens disclosed in Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. 55-7727 among the above-mentioned examples of the prior art, constant speed property is corrected, but curvature
45 of image field remains and it is difficult to keep the uniformity of spot. In this case, if design is made such that the size of the effective scanning width by this lens is sufficiently large relative to the plane to be scanned, curvature of image field can be made small, but the entire apparatus will become bulky, and this cannot be said to be practical.

In Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. 58-5706, the $f\theta$ lens comprising a spherical lens is made
50 into a meniscus lens having its concave surface facing the deflecting surface side to thereby accomplish aberration correction, but as in Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. 55-7727, an attempt to sufficiently correct curvature of image field and constant speed property at a time would give rise to the necessity of making the distance between this lens and the plane to be scanned great.

In Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. 63-50812, a toric lens is used to make a lens in which
55 curvature of image field and constant speed property are corrected. Particularly, the aberrations in the main scanning plane (curvature of image field and constant speed property) and the aberrations in the sub-scanning plane perpendicular to the main scanning plane can be corrected independently and therefore, better correction than in the aforescribed two examples is accomplished. Further, the deflecting surface

and the plane to be scanned are made into a conjugate relation on the sub-scanning cross-section, thereby accomplishing the correction of the inclination of the mirror surface of the deflector as well. The distance from the deflecting surface to the plane to be scanned is also kept relatively small. However, a toric lens, if viewed only in the main scanning plane, is equivalent to a spherical single lens, and it is difficult to correct curvature of image field and constant speed property at a time. Therefore, to provide a lens shape in which aberrations are good, it is necessary to make the thickness t of the lens considerably great relative to the focal length f , i.e., $0.3 < t/f < 0.5$, as described in this patent application. For this reason, as an actual lens, the manufacture thereof is difficult and the use of a single lens will lead to no merit.

In Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. 1-224721, a toric lens is also used and further, design is made such that convergent light is caused to enter the toric lens, thereby accomplishing aberration correction, but as in Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. 63-50812, even in the main scanning plane alone, it is difficult to make curvature of image field and constant speed property compatible. In this example, as described in the specification thereof, constant speed property is restricted to such a degree of correction that it can be electrically corrected (expressed as substantially constant speed in the specification), whereby the correction of curvature of image field is effected preponderantly. Thus, during image writing, the timing of image information is varied to thereby correct the distortion of the written image. In this case, however, constant speed property is under-corrected and thus, the speed of the spot on the plane to be scanned varies at all times, and the quantity of light received per unit time by the plane to be scanned is varied. It is possible to correct this by varying the quantity of laser light produced from the light source, but this will lead to too many correcting circuits, which does not mean the obtainment of the merit of using a single lens.

In the case of a single lens whose lens shape is a spherical shape in the main scanning plane as in these examples, it has been difficult to realize an $f\theta$ lens having a sufficient characteristic.

In contrast, as described in Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application Nos. 54-87540 and 54-98627, there is known an example in which an aspherical term is introduced to construct an $f\theta$ lens.

The aspherical lenses described in Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application Nos. 62-138823, 63-157122 and 1-99013 are such that the shape of the lens near the optical axis thereof is that of a meniscus lens in which the deflecting surface side is a concave surface or a biconvex lens, and in any of these lenses, the thickness t of the lens is great relative to the width of the plane to be scanned.

The example shown in Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. 62-138823 is a meniscus lens in which the deflecting surface side is a concave surface or a biconvex lens, but the thickness of the lens is 20 mm at smallest relative to the effective scanning width of 200 mm.

The example shown in Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. 63-157122 is a meniscus lens in which near the optical axis, the deflecting surface side is a concave surface, but the thickness of the lens is 30 mm at smallest relative to the maximum scanning width (the scanning width corresponding to the angle of view mentioned as the maximum scanning angle θ_{\max} in the specification; 254 mm or so in any embodiment).

The example shown in Japanese Laid-Open Patent Application No. 2-87109 is a lens which is biconvex near the optical axis and therefore, the thickness of the lens is also great.

It is difficult to make such aspherical lenses by carrying out the processing as is done in the manufacture of ordinary spherical lenses. Therefore, processing and molding are carried out by the use of materials such as plastics rich in workability to make such aspherical lenses, thereby solving the problem in manufacture. However, plastics are generally apt to be affected by environmental fluctuations, and are particularly apt to be varied in refractive index by humidity and temperature. Especially, where the thickness of the lens is great, a light beam passing therethrough is greatly subjected to a variation in refractive index and thus, the imaging position is varied by environmental fluctuations. Further, a great thickness of the lens is a factor which increases internal homogeneity, distortion, molding termination time, etc. in carrying out processing and molding.

Thus, the aspherical lenses known as the above-described three examples of the prior art could not be said to be practical because of their great lens thicknesses. Particularly in these examples, the shape of the deflection point side lens surface in the main scanning plane is not appropriate and therefore, to satisfy the performance necessary as an $f\theta$ lens, it is necessary to make the lens thicker than the practical range, and this has been low in realizability.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention has been made in view of the above-noted circumstances and the object thereof is to provide an $f\theta$ lens which satisfies the performance required of an $f\theta$ lens and yet whose lens thickness

is kept small and which is suitable for plasticization and comprises a single lens, and an image forming apparatus which uses such $f\theta$ lens, whereby the apparatus can be made compact and thin.

The above object of the present invention is achieved by the $f\theta$ lens of the present invention which will hereinafter be described and an image forming apparatus using the same.

5

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a cross-sectional view of a first embodiment of the present invention in the main scanning plane.

10 Figures 2A and 2B illustrate the shape of the main scanning cross-section of the surface shape of the $f\theta$ lens of the present invention which is adjacent to the deflection point side, Figure 2A referring to a case where $r_1 < Y_{\max}$, and Figure 2B referring to a case where $r_1 \geq Y_{\max}$.

Figure 3 illustrates the arrangement of the entire scanning system of the $f\theta$ lens of the present invention.

15 Figure 4 illustrates the state of a light beam incident on the $f\theta$ lens of the present invention in the main scanning plane.

Figure 5 illustrates the radius of curvature of the $f\theta$ lens of the present invention in the subscanning plane.

Figure 6 is a cross-sectional view of a second embodiment of the present invention in the main scanning plane.

20 Figure 7 is a cross-sectional view of a third embodiment of the present invention in the main scanning plane.

Figure 8 is a cross-sectional view of a fourth embodiment of the present invention in the main scanning plane.

25 Figure 9 is a cross-sectional view of a fifth embodiment of the present invention in the main scanning plane.

Figure 10 is a cross-sectional view of a sixth embodiment of the present invention in the main scanning plane.

Figure 11 is a cross-sectional view of a seventh embodiment of the present invention in the main scanning plane.

30 Figure 12 is a cross-sectional view of an eighth embodiment of the present invention in the main scanning plane.

Figures 13 to 20 show aberrations in the embodiments of the $f\theta$ lens of the present invention.

Figure 21 is a cross-sectional view of an image forming apparatus using the $f\theta$ lens of the present invention.

35

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

In the $f\theta$ lens of the present invention which is an $f\theta$ lens comprised of a lens, the shape of the curved surface of at least the lens surface of said lens which is adjacent to the deflection point side of a deflector in the main scanning plane is an aspherical shape and particularly, near the optical axis, in at least the main scanning plane, this aspherical shape is convex toward the deflection point, and when the radius of curvature of this convex shape near the optical axis in the main scanning plane is r_1 and the focal length of the $f\theta$ lens near the optical axis in the main scanning plane is f_m , there is the relation that

45
$$0 \leq r_1 < |f_m| \quad (1)$$

between r_1 and the absolute value of f_m and yet, when with the point of intersection between the lens surface adjacent to the deflection point side and the optical axis as the origin and with the coordinates system of the x-axis plotted in the direction of the optical axis and the coordinates system of the y-axis plotted in the main scanning plane perpendicularly thereto, the surface shape in the main scanning plane is expressed as a function $S_1(y)$ in which y is a variable, and when the maximum effective diameter of this surface in the main scanning plane is Y_{\max} and $S_1(y)$ is defined between 0 and Y_{\max} , and when as shown, the relation between the aspherical shape and the radius of curvature near the optical axis is $r_1 < Y_{\max}$, that is, when a spherical lens having the radius of curvature r_1 cannot have the effective diameter Y_{\max} (e.g. Figure 2-a), the lens shape $S_1(r_1)$ at a position $y = r_1$ satisfies

55
$$-1 < S_1(r_1)/r_1 < 0.5 \quad (2a)$$

and when $r_1 \geq Y_{\max}$, that is, when a spherical lens having the radius of curvature r_1 can have the effective diameter Y_{\max} (e.g. Figure 2-b), the lens shape S_1 (Y_{\max}) at a position $y = Y_{\max}$ satisfies.

$$\begin{aligned} -1 \times Y_{\max}/r_1 &< S_1(Y_{\max})/Y_{\max} \\ &< 0.5 \times Y_{\max}/r_1 \quad \dots\dots (2b) \end{aligned}$$

whereby a more practical $f\theta$ lens is realized. In this case, if the shape of the lens surface adjacent to the deflection point side in the main scanning plane is convex toward the deflection point and does not satisfy expression (1), the constant speed property near the optical axis will be under-corrected, and if said shape does not satisfy expression (2a) or expression (2b), the correction of the curvature of image field in the main scanning surface will become insufficient. That is, it is the condition necessary for the $f\theta$ lens of the present invention to satisfy the performance required of an $f\theta$ lens that expression (1) and expression (2a) or (2b) be satisfied at a time.

Further, in the $f\theta$ lens of the present invention, even when a material whose refractive index is varied by an environmental fluctuation such as the fluctuation of humidity or temperature is chosen as the material of the lens, so that the influence thereof may be small, the thickness t of the lens, relative to the effective scanning width L (see Figure 3), can be kept in a range expressed as

$$0 < t/L < 0.08 \quad (3)$$

or when the distance from the deflecting surface of the lens to the plane to be scanned is g , the thickness t can be kept in a range expressed as

$$0 < t/g < 0.15 \quad (4)$$

and the fluctuation of the imaging position by an environmental fluctuation can be kept small.

Further, the choosing the lens shape so that the shape of the lens near the optical axis may be a convex meniscus lens in at least the main scanning plane, the thickness of the lens can be kept small and yet, the thickness of the lens near the optical axis and the thickness of the lens in the effective end portion thereby can be made not to differ greatly from each other to thereby improve the homogeneity during processing and molding, and processing conditions such as distortion and processing time.

Also, by choosing the focal length f_m of the lens near the optic axis in the main scanning plane relative to the distance g from the deflecting surface to the plane to be scanned so as to satisfy

$$|f_m|/g > 0.8 \quad (5)$$

and by using an aspherical lens, assemblage property such as the mounting accuracy of the lens can be prevented from being remarkably aggravated. In this case, the sign of f_m may be $+$ or $-$.

Also, if the light beam incident on this lens is made into convergent light in at least the main scanning plane, the distance from the lens to the plane to be scanned can be shortened to thereby make the size of the entire scanning system small. In this case, when the distance from the deflection point to a point at which this convergent light is imaged in the main scanning plane is p and the distance from the deflection point to the plane to be scanned is g (see Figure 4), design is made such that convergent light which will satisfy the condition that

$$0.7 < p/g \quad (6)$$

is caused to be incident on the lens, the aggravation of the constant speed property in the end portion of the plane to be scanned which is caused by the lens being made compact can be suppressed within a practical range. On the other hand, if this incident light beam is made into substantially parallel light in at least the main scanning plane, there will be a limit in making the lens compact, but it will become possible to alleviate the mutual mounting accuracy of the deflection point and the $f\theta$ lens.

In the $f\theta$ lens of the present invention, the lens shape is not made into an axis-symmetrical lens shape and with regard to at least one of the curved surface on the deflection point side and the curved surface on the side of the plane to be scanned, the radius of curvature near the optical axis differ between the main

scanning cross-section and the sub-scanning cross-section (a cross-section perpendicular to the main scanning cross-section and containing the optical axis), whereby the curvature of image field in the sub-scanning direction (a direction perpendicular to the direction in which the light beam is scanned by an optical deflector and the direction of the optical axis) can be kept small than when the lens is constructed of only an axis-symmetrical shape.

Figure, with regard to at least one of the curved surface on the deflection point side and the curved surface on the side of the plane to be scanned, design is made such that the radius of curvature r' (see Figure 5) of the curved surface of the lens determined in a plane containing a normal in the main scanning plane and perpendicular to the main scanning plane continuously varies in the effective portion of the lens, whereby the curvature of image field in the sub-scanning direction can be better corrected.

In this case, if in the sub-scanning cross-section about the optical axis, the deflection point and the plane to be scanned are designed so as to be in an optically conjugate relation, the inclination of the deflecting surface of the deflector can be corrected in advance.

Figure 1 shows a first embodiment of the θ lens according to the present invention. Figure 1 is a cross-sectional view of the lens as it is seen in the main scanning plane. The design values of this lens are shown in Table 1, and the performance of this lens is shown in Table 2. The main scanning plane refers to a light beam surface the light beam deflected by the deflecting surface of the deflector forms with the lapse of time.

The cross-sectional shape of this lens in the main scanning plane, when with the point of intersection between the lens surface and the optical axis as the origin, the coordinates system of the x-axis is plotted in the direction of the optic axis and the coordinates system of the y-axis is plotted in the main scanning plane perpendicularly to the direction of the optical axis, is developed into the form of a polynomial including the high-order term that

$$S(y) = \frac{y^2/r_1}{1 + \sqrt{1 - (1+K) \left(\frac{y}{r_1}\right)^2}} + By^4 + Cy^6 + Dy^8 + Ey^{10},$$

where r is the radius of curvature of the lens surface in the main scanning plane near the optical axis. In this case, with regard to respective surfaces, as shown in Table 1, the cross-sectional shape of the lens surface adjacent to the deflection point of the deflecting surface is expressed as a function $S_1(y)$ in which y is a variable, the radius of curvature in the main scanning plane near the optical axis is expressed as r_1 , the coefficients of the high-order term are expressed as k_1, B_1, C_1, D_1 and E_1 , the cross-sectional shape of the lens surface adjacent to the plane to be scanned is expressed as a function $S_2(y)$ in which y is a variable, the radius of curvature in the main scanning plane near the optical axis is expressed as r_2 , and the coefficients of the high-order term are expressed as k_2, B_2, C_2, D_2 and E_2 . With regard to the lens surface adjacent to the deflection point, the functions $S_1(y)$ and r_1 are shown in Figure 2 with the maximum effective diameter in the main scanning plane as Y_{max} .

With regard to the arrangement of the entire scanning system, as shown in Figure 3, the distance from the deflection point of the optical deflector to the entrance surface of the lens is a , the thickness of the lens on the optical axis is t , the distance from the exist surface of the lens to the plane to be scanned is b , the distance from the deflection point to the plane to be scanned is g , the maximum scanning angle of the lens is θ_{max} , and the effective scanning width on the plane to be scanned is L . Figure 3 shows a cross-sectional view of the scanning system as it is seen in the main scanning plane.

Also, the incident light onto the optical deflector, as shown in Figure 4, is convergent light which is imaged at a distance p from the deflection point, in the main scanning plane. In the sub-scanning plane, the light beam emitted from a light source, not shown, passes through a cylindrical lens, not shown, and enters so as to be imaged on the deflection point of the optical deflector. In the sub-scanning plane, the lens assumes the construction of a so-called inclination correcting optical system.

The shape of this lens in the sub-scanning direction, when the radius of curvature of the lens surface near the optical axis in the sub-scanning cross-section containing the optical axis is r_s and as shown in Figure 5, the z-axis is plotted in a direction containing a normal to the curved surface of the lens in the main scanning plane and perpendicular to the main scanning plane and the radius of curvature determined in a plane containing the normal and the z-axis is r' and when the position of the foot of this normal is at a

position of y from the optical axis, is expressed by the use of a variable which gives a variation in radius of curvature in the form of

$$S'(y) = \frac{z^2/r'}{1 + \sqrt{1 - (1 + K') \left(\frac{z}{r'}\right)^2}}$$

where $r' = r_s (1 + Ay^2 + By^4 + Cy^6 + Dy^8 + Ey^{10})$. Thus, the shape of the lens in the sub-scanning direction perpendicular to the main scanning plane varies continuously in accordance with the value of y . In this case, with regard to each surface, as shown in Table 1, the lens shape of the lens surface adjacent to the deflection point in the sub-scanning plane is expressed as $S'_1(y)$, the radius of curvature in the sub-scanning plane near the optical axis is expressed as r_1 , coefficients which give a variation in curvature are expressed as A'_1, B'_1, C'_1 and E'_1 , the lens shape of the lens surface adjacent to the plane to be scanned in the sub-scanning plane is expressed as $S'_2(y)$, the radius of curvature in the sub-scanning plane near the optical axis is expressed as r_2 , and coefficients which give a variation in curvature are expressed as A'_2, B'_2, C'_2, D'_2 and E'_2 .

In this lens, with regard to the sub-scanning cross-section of the lens, the deflection point and the sub-scanning cross-section are in a conjugate relation, thereby correcting inclination.

In the case of the first embodiment, $S'_1(y)$ is constant over the whole lens surface and $r' = \infty$.

Figure 6 shows a second embodiment of the $f\theta$ lens according to the present invention. Figure 6 shows a cross-sectional view of the lens as it is seen in the main scanning plane. The design values of this lens are shown in Table 3, and the performance of this lens is shown in Table 4.

In the second embodiment, the shape of the lens in the main scanning cross-section is the same as that in the first embodiment, but the shape of the lens in the sub-scanning direction differs from that in the first embodiment. Particularly, the surface adjacent to the deflector is an aspherical surface symmetrical about the optical axis. In the other points, the shape of this lens is similar to that of the first embodiment.

Thus, the $f\theta$ lens of the present invention is wide in the degree of freedom of design with regard to the shape in the sub-scanning direction.

Figure 7 shows a third embodiment of the $f\theta$ lens according to the present invention. Figure 7 shows a cross-sectional view of the lens as it is seen in the main scanning plane. The design values of this lens are shown in Table 5, and the performance of this lens is shown in Table 6.

This embodiment is one in which the thickness t of the lens is made thick as compared with the first embodiment. In the extent of this embodiment, the influence of environmental fluctuations or the like poses no problem in practical use. Figure 8 shows a fourth embodiment of the $f\theta$ lens according to the present invention. Figure 8 shows a cross-sectional view of the lens as it is seen in the main scanning plane. The design values of this lens are shown in Table 7, and the performance of this lens is shown in Table 8.

This embodiment is one in which the lens is made further thick as compared with the third embodiment. In this case, t/L is at the utmost possible limit of the range of expression (2), while t/g is sufficiently within the range of expression (3) and therefore, the influence of environmental fluctuations becomes great, but is within a practical range.

Figure 9 shows a fifth embodiment of the $f\theta$ lens according to the present invention. Figure 9 shows a cross-sectional view of the lens as it is seen in the main scanning plane. The design values of this lens are shown in Table 9, and the performance of this lens is shown in Table 10.

This lens is such that the incident light is parallel light in the main scanning plane, and in the sub-scanning plane, it enters so as to be imaged on the deflecting surface of the optical deflector. Therefore, the value of p is greater than in the other embodiments having the same maximum scanning angle and the same effective scanning width, but this embodiment has the advantage that aberrations will not extremely change even if the incident light beam deviates in the main scanning plane.

Figure 10 shows a sixth embodiment of the $f\theta$ lens according to the present invention. Figure 10 shows a cross-sectional view of the lens as it is seen in the main scanning plane. The design values of this lens are shown in Table 11, and the performance of this lens is shown in Table 12.

This embodiment is one in which the maximum scanning angle Q_{\max} is designed at 32° . In the case of this lens, $r_1 \geq Y_{\max}$ and therefore, not $S_1(r_1)/r_1 < 0.5$ of expression (2a) but $S_1(Y_{\max})/Y_{\max} < 0.5 \times Y_{\max}/r_1$ of expression (2b) has a meaning. Accordingly, the values of $S_1(Y_{\max})$ and $0.5 \times Y_{\max}/r_1$ are shown in Table 11.

Figure 11 shows a seventh embodiment of the $f\theta$ lens according to the present invention. Figure 11

shows a cross-sectional view of the lens as it is seen in the main scanning plane. The design values of this lens are shown in Table 13, and the performance of this lens is shown in Table 14.

This embodiment is one in which the maximum scanning angle Q_{\max} is designed at 56° .

Figure 12 shows an eighth embodiment of the $f\theta$ lens according to the present invention. Figure 12 shows a cross-sectional view of the lens as it is seen in the main scanning plane. The design values of this lens are shown in Table 15, and the performance of this lens is shown in Table 16.

This embodiment is one in which design is made such that a becomes great as compared with the other embodiments having the same maximum scanning angle.

The tables of the design values of the embodiments of the $f\theta$ lens of the present invention will be shown below.

Table 1

Wavelength used	780 nm	Coefficients of development-expression of lens surface					
		Lens surface on the deflection point side.			Lens surface on the side of the plane to be scanned		
		Main scanning S_1 (y) side			Main scanning S_2 (y) side		
Refractive index of lens	1.57467						
L	216 mm						
a	31.64816 mm	r_1	26.9119 mm		r_2	28.8687 mm	
t	6.17434 mm	k_1	-4.78688		k_2	-5.79781	
b	108.78799 mm	B_1	-2.55176 E - 6		B_2	-3.14086 E - 6	
g	146.61049 mm	C_1	-2.88092 E - 10		C_2	5.02452 E - 11	
θ_{\max}	44°	D_1	1.16473 E - 13		D_2	1.78545 E - 14	
Y_{\max}	40.5 mm	E_1	-2.66441 E - 18		E_2	-3.79296 E - 17	
f_m	321.11485 mm	Sub-scanning S_1' (y) side			Sub-scanning S_2' (y) side		
p	292.79943 mm	rs	∞ mm		rs	-15.4070 mm	
Imaged at sub-scanning deflection point		A_1'	0		A_2'	1.95908 E - 3	
$S_1(r_1)/r_1$	0.26105	B_1'	0		B_2'	-3.47043 E - 6	
t/L	1.02858	C_1'	0		C_2'	3.04609 E - 9	
t/g	0.04211	D_1'	0		D_2'	-8.74076 E - 13	
$ f_m /g$	2.19026	E_1'	0		E_2'	-4.84512 E - 17	
p/g	1.99712						

Table 2

Incidence angle of view	Imaging position	Curvature of image field on the main scanning plane side	Curvature of image field on the sub-scanning plane side	Constant speed property
0°	0 mm	0.42491 mm	0.08531 mm	0 %
11°	26.82169 mm	0.18730 mm	- 0.49197 mm	- 0.66041 %
22°	53.93793 mm	0.06700 mm	0.29648 mm	- 0.11494 %
33°	80.91486 mm	- 0.03744 mm	- 0.32326 mm	- 0.10511 %
44°	108.09429 mm	- 0.11663 mm	- 1.19237 mm	0.08731 %

Table 3

Wavelength used	780 nm	Coefficients of development expression of lens surface					
		Lens surface on the deflection point side			Lens surface on the side of the plane to be scanned		
		Main scanning side	S_1 (y)	Main scanning side	S_2 (y)	Main scanning side	S_3 (y)
L	216 mm	r_1	26.9119 mm	r_2	28.8687 mm	k_3	-5.79781
a	31.64816 mm	k_1	-4.78688	B_1	-2.55176 E - 6	C_1	5.02452 E - 11
t	6.17434 mm	D_1	1.16473 E - 13	E_1	-2.66441 E - 18	r_s	-30.1915 mm
b	108.78799 mm					A_2'	9.40209 E - 4
g	146.61049 mm					B_2'	-2.78179 E - 6
θ_{max}	44°					C_2'	-2.97918 E - 9
Y_{max}	40.5 mm					D_2'	-1.58547 E - 12
f_m	321.11485 mm					E_2'	3.34559 E - 16
p	292.79943 mm						
Incident light sub-scanning side	Imaged at deflection point						
$S_1(r_1)/r_1$	0.26105						
t/L	0.02858						
t/g	0.04211						
$ f_m /g$	2.19026						
p/g	1.99712						

Table 4

Incidence angle of view	Imaging position	Curvature of image field on the main scanning plane side	Curvature of image field on the sub-scanning plane side	Constant speed property
0°	0 mm	0.42491 mm	0.07271 mm	0 %
11°	26.82169 mm	0.18730 mm	- 0.12918 mm	- 0.66041 %
22°	53.93793 mm	0.06700 mm	0.05200 mm	- 0.11494 %
33°	80.91486 mm	- 0.03744 mm	- 1.09368 mm	- 0.10511 %
44°	108.09429 mm	- 0.11663 mm	0.00991 mm	0.08731 %

Table 5

Wavelength used	780 nm	Coefficients of development expression of lens surface					
		Lens surface on the deflection point side			Lens surface on the side of the plane to be scanned		
		Main scanning side		S_1 (y)	Main scanning side		S_2 (y)
L	216 mm	r_1	27.9359 mm		r_2	28.2013 mm	
a	30.34728 mm	k_1	-5.12297		k_2	-5.57735	
t	10.00000 mm	B_1	-2.62615 E - 6		B_2	-3.05805 E - 6	
b	102.72251 mm	C_1	-2.84538 E - 10		C_2	2.67583 E - 10	
g	143.06979 mm	D_1	2.26473 E - 13		D_2	-2.32333 E - 14	
θ_{max}	44°	E_1	-2.66441 E - 18		E_2	-2.19162 E - 17	
Y_{max}	39.2 mm	Sub-scanning side		S_1' (y)	Sub-scanning side		S_2' (y)
f_m	350.18611 mm	r_s	∞ mm		r_s	-15.5395 mm	
p	292.79943 mm	A_1'	0		A_2'	2.07171 E - 3	
Incident light sub-scanning side	Imaged at deflection point	B_1'	0		B_2'	-3.79789 E - 6	
$S_1(r_1)/r_1$	0.24763	C_1'	0		C_2'	-3.28469 E - 9	
t/L	0.02315	D_1'	0		D_2'	-6.34188 E - 13	
t/g	0.03495	E_1'	0		E_2'	-2.01964 E - 17	
$ f_m /g$	2.44766						
p/g	2.04655						

Table 6

Incidence angle of view	Imaging position	Curvature of image field on the main scanning plane side	Curvature of image field on the sub-scanning plane side	Constant speed property
0°	0 mm	0.00681 mm	0.03452 mm	0 %
11°	26.88949 mm	- 0.11213 mm	- 0.20048 mm	- 0.40930 %
22°	54.08625 mm	0.02424 mm	0.10438 mm	0.15972 %
33°	80.97892 mm	0.05452 mm	- 0.25814 mm	- 0.02602 %
44°	107.99877 mm	0.27536 mm	- 1.15897 mm	- 0.00114 %

Table 7

Wavelength used	780 nm	Coefficients of development expression of lens surface					
		Lens surface on the deflection point side			Lens surface on the side of the plane to be scanned		
		Main scanning side		Sub-scanning side		Main scanning side	
L	216 mm	S_1 (y)		S_1' (y)		S_2 (y)	
a	29.44288 mm	r_1	2.95055 mm			r_2	27.6168 mm
t	15.00000 mm	k_1	-5.53373			k_2	-5.23709
b	94.50704 mm	B_1	-2.70055 E - 6			B_2	-2.83943 E - 6
g	138.94992 mm	C_1	-1.85714 E - 10			C_2	4.25077 E - 10
θ_{\max}	44°	D_1	3.09180 E - 13			D_2	-1.30815 E - 14
Y_{\max}	38.3 mm	E_1	-2.42201 E - 17			E_2	9.11235 E - 18
f_m	395.46596 mm	Sub-scanning side		S_1' (y)		Sub-scanning side	
p	292.79943 mm	rs	∞ mm			rs	-15.8563 mm
Incident light sub-scanning side	Imaged at deflection point	A_1'	0			A_2'	2.12736 E - 3
$S_1(r_1)/r_1$	0.23120	B_1'	0			B_2'	-3.85147 E - 6
t/L	0.06944	C_1'	0			C_2'	-3.28896 E - 9
t/g	0.10795	D_1'	0			D_2'	-6.15462 E - 13
$ f_m /g$	2.84610	E_1'	0			E_2'	-1.78469 E - 16
p/g	2.10723						

Table 8

Incidence angle of view	Imaging position	Curvature of image field on the main scanning plane side	Curvature of image field on the sub-scanning plane side	Constant speed property
0°	0 mm	0.01094 mm	0.00454 mm	0 %
11°	26.86572 mm	- 0.08744 mm	- 0.02620 mm	- 0.49733 %
22°	54.10123 mm	0.06297 mm	0.01514 mm	- 0.18746 %
33°	80.97640 mm	0.03416 mm	- 0.02887 mm	- 0.02914 %
44°	108.00456 mm	0.32891 mm	- 0.11629 mm	0.00422 %

Table 9

Wavelength used	780 nm	Coefficients of development expression of lens surface					
		Lens surface on the deflection point side			Lens surface on the side of the plane to be scanned		
		Main scanning S_1 (y) side			Main scanning S_2 (y) side		
L	216 mm	r_1	22.0311 mm		r_2	27.9182 mm	
a	19.61717 mm	k_1	-6.70387		k_2	-10.4291	
t	5.00000 mm	B_1	3.29505 E - 7		B_2	-2.29333 E - 6	
b	128.49907 mm	C_1	-2.46699 E - 9		C_2	5.95637 E - 10	
g	153.11624 mm	D_1	1.46251 E - 13		D_2	6.16143 E - 13	
θ_{max}	44°	E_1	1.37547 E - 17		E_2	-7.14808 E - 16	
Y_{max}	27.9 mm	Sub-scanning S_1' (y) side			Sub-scanning S_2' (y) side		
f_m	140.10521 mm	r_s	∞ mm		r_s	-11.1244 mm	
p	∞ mm	A_1'	0		A_2'	3.59219 E - 3	
Incident light sub-scanning side	Imaged at deflection point	B_1'	0		B_2'	-1.08695 E - 5	
$S_1(r_1)/r_1$	0.26972	C_1'	0		C_2'	2.09015 E - 8	
t/L	0.02315	D_1'	0		D_2'	-4.08754 E - 13	
t/g	0.03265	E_1'	0		E_2'	-1.98562 E - 14	
$ f_m /g$	0.91503						
p/g	∞						

Table 10

Incidence angle of view	Imaging position	Curvature of image field on the main scanning plane side	Curvature of image field on the sub-scanning plane side	Constant speed property
0°	0 mm	0.00188 mm	- 0.03561 mm	0 %
11°	26.92541 mm	- 0.02322 mm	0.01809 mm	- 0.27626 %
22°	54.06152 mm	0.01473 mm	0.17296 mm	0.11393 %
33°	80.98224 mm	- 0.00237 mm	0.43728 mm	- 0.02193 %
44°	107.99953 mm	- 0.02902 mm	1.03899 mm	- 0.00044 %

Table II

Wavelength used	780 nm	Coefficients of development expression of lens surface					
		Lens surface on the deflection point side			Lens surface on the side of the plane to be scanned		
L	216 mm	Main scanning S_1 (y)			Main scanning S_2 (y)		
a	71.08404 mm	r_1	60.0000 mm	r_2	73.3174 mm		
t	5.00000 mm	k_1	-3.87781	k_2	-4.34297		
b	136.16557 mm	B_1	-1.84687 E - 7	B_2	-6.74641 E - 7		
g	212.24962 mm	C_1	-8.95896 E - 10	C_2	-7.69111 E - 10		
θ_{max}	32°	D_1	2.06800 E - 13	D_2	2.34907 E - 13		
Y_{max}	48.9 mm	E_1	-3.01247 E - 17	E_2	-5.42806 E - 17		
f_m	505.53622 mm	Sub-scanning S_1' (y)			Sub-scanning S_2' (y)		
p	274.92354 mm	r_s	∞ mm	r_s	-27.6158 mm		
Incident light sub-scanning side	Imaged at deflection point	A_1'	0	A_2'	3.43802 E - 4		
$S_1 (Y_{max}) / Y_{max}$	0.23093	B_1'	0	B_2'	-1.61819 E - 7		
$0.5 \times Y_{max} / r_1$	0.40750	C_1'	0	C_2'	-3.50099 E - 11		
t/L	0.02315	D_1'	0	D_2'	-3.10358 E - 14		
t/g	0.02356	E_1'	0	E_2'	-3.04885 E - 18		
$ f_m /g$	2.38180						
p/g	1.29232						

Table 12.

Incidence angle of view	Imaging position	Curvature of image field on the main scanning plane side	Curvature of image field on the sub-scanning plane side	Constant speed property
0°	0 mm	0.00464 mm	0.01597 mm	0 %
8°	26.92064 mm	0.03678 mm	- 0.02679 mm	- 0.29393 %
16°	53.93273 mm	- 0.13788 mm	- 0.05082 mm	- 0.12457 %
24°	81.05539 mm	- 0.14220 mm	- 0.52391 mm	0.06738 %
32°	108.00432 mm	0.27305 mm	- 1.18613 mm	0.00400 %

Table 13

Wavelength used	780 nm	Coefficients of development expression of lens surface					
		Lens surface on the deflection point side			Lens surface on the side of the plane to be scanned		
		Main scanning side	S_1 (y)		Main scanning side	S_2 (y)	
L	216 mm						
a	15.05054 mm	r_1	8.94552 mm		r_2	7.71858 mm	
t	5.00000 mm	k_1	-7.63139		k_2	-7.68973	
b	86.93520 mm	B_1	-9.78039 E - 7		B_2	-4.97108 E - 6	
g	106.98574 mm	C_1	-3.09809 E - 9		C_2	2.73858 E - 9	
θ_{max}	56°	D_1	1.79254 E - 12		D_2	-1.17732 E - 12	
Y_{max}	36.4 mm	E_1	-4.3266 E - 16		E_2	-4.13303 E - 17	
f_m	200.99035 mm	Sub-scanning side			Sub-scanning side		
			S_1' (y)			S_2' (y)	
p	319.47862 mm	rs	25.0783 mm		rs	-11.5520 mm	
Imaged at deflection point							
$S_1(r_1)/r_1$	0.26884	A_1'	0		A_2'	1.59426 E - 2	
t/L	0.02315	B_1'	0		B_2'	-7.46233 E - 5	
t/g	0.04674	C_1'	0		C_2'	-1.45733 E - 7	
$ f_m /g$	1.87866	D_1'	0		D_2'	3.30509 E - 11	
p/g	2.98618	E_1'	0		E_2'	-7.56819 E - 14	

Table 14

Incidence angle of view	Imaging position	Curvature of image field on the main scanning plane side	Curvature of image field on the sub-scanning plane side	Constant speed property
0°	0 mm	- 0.00296 mm	- 0.01150 mm	0 %
14°	26.96683 mm	- 0.00101 mm	0.03840 mm	- 0.12285 %
28°	54.01959 mm	- 0.00210 mm	0.08025 mm	0.03628 %
42°	80.99798 mm	- 0.00235 mm	1.98343 mm	- 0.00249 %
56°	108.00401 mm	0.03719 mm	- 0.12910 mm	0.00371 %

Table 15

Wavelength used	780 nm	Coefficients of development expression of lens surface					
		Lens surface on the deflection point side			Lens surface on the side of the plane to be scanned		
		Main scanning side	S_1 (y)	Main scanning side	Main scanning side	S_2 (y)	
L	216 mm	r_1	17.1466 mm	r_2	14.9427 mm		
a	56.31337 mm	k_1	-3.08642	k_2	-2.96849		
t	5.00000 mm	B_1	-1.06905 E - 6	B_2	-1.19000 E - 6		
b	72.65824 mm	C_1	-1.11624 E - 9	C_2	-8.41386 E - 10		
g	133.97362 mm	D_1	3.67839 E - 13	D_2	2.40892 E - 13		
θ_{max}	44°	E_1	-2.83506 E - 17	E_2	-1.43905 E - 17		
Y_{max}	70.4 mm	Sub-scanning side		Sub-scanning side		Sub-scanning side	
f_m	-1175.861993 mm	rs	∞ mm	A_1'	0	A_2'	1.8769 E - 3
p	145.00000 mm	B_1'	0	B_2'	-2.21157 E - 6	C_1'	-6.54907 E - 10
Incident light sub-scanning side	Imaged at deflection point	C_1'	0	D_1'	0	D_2'	2.70727 E - 14
$S_1(r_1)/r_1$	0.35574	E_1'	0	E_2'	-1.74730 E - 17		
t/L	0.02315						
t/g	0.03732						
$ f_m /g$	8.77682						
p/g	1.08230						

Table 16

Incidence angle of view	Imaging position	Curvature of image field on the main scanning plane side	Curvature of image field on the sub-scanning plane side	Constant speed property
0°	0 mm	0.02100 mm	1.21237 mm	0 %
11°	26.44729 mm	- 0.06439 mm	1.09819 mm	- 2.04707 %
22°	53.92038 mm	- 1.50412 mm	0.83558 mm	- 0.14744 %
33°	81.15944 mm	0.47430 mm	0.58732 mm	0.19684 %
44°	107.99872 mm	- 0.35419 mm	0.55777 mm	- 0.00119 %

Figures 13 to 20 show aberrations in the embodiments of the $f\theta$ lens of the present invention.

Description will now be made of an image forming apparatus using an optical scanning device to form an image on an image carrier.

Figure 21 is a cross-sectional view of a laser beam printer which is an image forming apparatus for recording images by a laser beam to which the $f\theta$ lens of the present invention is applied.

Description will hereinafter be made of Figure 21.

In Figure 21, the reference numeral 39 designates a photosensitive drum rotated in the direction of

arrow. Around the photosensitive drum 39, there are provided in succession a charger 40 for uniformly charging the surface of the drum, a developing device 41 for developing a latent image on the photosensitive drum, a transfer charger 44 for transferring the image developed by the developing device 41 to paper, and a cleaner 46 for removing any unnecessary developer remaining on the surface of the photosensitive drum after the image transfer.

The reference numeral 42 denotes a paper supply cassette containing recording paper therein, the reference numeral 43 designates register rollers, and the reference numeral 45 denotes a fixating device for making the transferred image semipermanent. The reference numeral 49 designates a fan for forming an air stream on the underside of a housing to thereby prevent the temperature rise of an optical system. A semiconductor laser output portion 6 contained in a containing portion formed integrally with a base plate 5 outputs a laser beam optically modulated by an extraneous signal in conformity with recording information, and this laser beam emerges from a housing comprised of the base plate 5 and a cover member 27 through a cylindrical lens 33 highly accurately held and positioned by a supporting portion formed integrally with the base plate 5 and the containing portion, a rotatable polygon mirror 2 for deflecting the light beam at a uniform angular velocity, and an f θ lens 31, and scans on the photosensitive drum 39 via a mirror 48, whereby a charge pattern conforming to the recording information is formed on the photosensitive drum 39.

The reference numeral 34 denotes a positioning member for the housing provided on the underside of the base plate 5 integrally with the base plate, and positioned highly accurately with the photosensitive drum 39 and the mirror 48. Positioning accuracy is enhanced by this positioning member, whereby the positional accuracy relative to the photosensitive drum is enhanced and therefore, it becomes possible to obtain more excellent images.

The charge pattern on the drum is visualized by the developing device 41. This visualized image is transferred by the transfer charger 44 onto the recording paper fed from the paper supply cassette 42, whereafter the recording paper is fed to the fixating device 45 for fixation of the image. Any developer remaining on the photosensitive drum after the image transfer is removed by the cleaner 46 and prepared for another use.

Such an image forming apparatus to which the f θ lens of the present invention is applied can be made compact and thin.

As described above, according to the present invention, there can be realized an f θ lens comprising a single lens in which the shape of the curved surface of at least the lens surface on the deflection point side in the main scanning plane is an aspherical shape and particularly near the optical axis, this aspherical shape becomes convex toward the deflection point side and further, the shape of this surface in the main scanning plane is made to satisfy expressions (1) and (2-a) or (2-b), whereby the f θ lens satisfies the performance required of an f θ lens and yet the thickness of the lens is kept small so as to be suitable for plasticization. Also, the use of such f θ lens can realize an image forming apparatus which can be made compact and thin.

This specification discloses an f θ lens acting to effect uniform speed scanning while causing a light beam deflected at a uniform angular velocity by the deflecting surface of a deflector to be imaged on a plane to be scanned, wherein the shape of the curved surface of at least the lens surface of the lens which is adjacent to the deflection point side of the deflecting surface in the main scanning plane is an aspherical shape and particularly, near the optical axis, in at least the main scanning plane, this aspherical shape is convex toward the deflection point, and when the radius of curvature of this convex shape near the optical axis in the main scanning plane is r_1 and the focal length of the f θ lens near the optical axis in the main scanning plane is f_m ,

$$0 \leq r_1 < |f_m|$$

and yet, when with the point of intersection between the lens surface adjacent to the deflection point side and the optical axis as the origin and with the coordinates system of the x-axis plotted in the direction of the optical axis and the coordinates system of the y-axis plotted in the main scanning plane perpendicularly thereto, the surface shape in the main scanning plane is expressed as a function $S_1(y)$ in which y is a variable, and when the maximum effective diameter of this surface in the main scanning plane is Y_{max} , $S_1(y)$ is defined between 0 and Y_{max} , and when $r_1 < Y_{max}$,

$$-1 < S_1(r_1)/r_1 < 0.5$$

and when $r_1 \geq Y_{max}$,

$$-1 \times Y_{\max}/r_1 < S_1(Y_{\max})/Y_{\max} < 0.5 \times Y_{\max}/r_1.$$

The specification also discloses an image forming apparatus using such $f\theta$ lens.

5 Claims

1. An $f\theta$ lens acting to effect uniform speed scanning while causing a light beam deflected at a uniform angular velocity by the deflecting surface of a deflector to be imaged on a plane to be scanned, wherein the shape of the curved surface of at least the lens surface of the lens which is adjacent to the deflection point side of the deflecting surface in the main scanning plane is an aspherical shape and particularly, near the optical axis, in at least the main scanning plane, this aspherical shape is convex toward said deflection point, and when the radius of curvature of this convex shape near the optical axis in the main scanning plane is r_1 and the focal length of the $f\theta$ lens near the optical axis in the main scanning plane is f_m ,

$$0 \leq r_1 < |f_m|$$

and yet, when with the point of intersection between the lens surface adjacent to the deflection point side and the optical axis as the origin and with the coordinates system of the x-axis plotted in the direction of the optical axis and the coordinates system of the y-axis plotted in the main scanning plane perpendicularly thereto, the surface shape in the main scanning plane is expressed as a function $S_1(y)$ in which y is a variable, and when the maximum effective diameter of this surface in the main scanning plane is Y_{\max} , $S_1(y)$ is defined between 0 and Y_{\max} , and when $r_1 < Y_{\max}$,

$$-1 < S_1(r_1)/r_1 < 0.5$$

and when $r_1 \geq Y_{\max}$,

$$-1 \times Y_{\max}/r_1 < S_1(Y_{\max})/Y_{\max} < 0.5 \times Y_{\max}/r_1.$$

2. An $f\theta$ lens according to Claim 1, wherein when the thickness of the $f\theta$ lens on the optical axis thereof is t and the effective scanning width on the plane to be scanned is L ,

$$0 < t/L < 0.08.$$

3. An $f\theta$ lens according to Claim 1, wherein when the thickness of the $f\theta$ lens on the optical axis thereof is t and the distance from the deflection point of the deflecting surface to the plane to be scanned is g ,

$$0 < t/g < 0.15.$$

4. An $f\theta$ lens according to Claim 1, wherein the focal length f_m near the optical axis in the main scanning plane and the distance g from the deflection point of the deflecting surface to the plane to be scanned are

$$|f_m|/g > 0.8.$$

5. An $f\theta$ lens according to Claim 1, wherein the shape of the lens near the optical axis is a meniscus lens convex toward the deflection point side of the deflecting surface in at least the main scanning plane.

6. An $f\theta$ lens according to Claim 1, wherein the light beam incident on the lens is substantially convergent light in at least the main scanning plane.

7. An $f\theta$ lens according to Claim 6, wherein the light beam incident on the lens is substantially convergent light in at least the main scanning plane, and the distance p from the deflection point of the deflecting surface to a point at which the convergent light is imaged in the main scanning plane and the distance g from the deflection point of the deflecting surface to the plane to be scanned are

$$0.7 < p/g.$$

8. An $f\theta$ lens according to Claim 1, wherein the light beam incident on the lens is substantially parallel light in at least the main scanning plane.
9. An $f\theta$ lens according to Claim 1, wherein with regard to at least one of a curved surface adjacent to the deflection point and a curved surface adjacent to the plane to be scanned, the radius of curvature near the optical axis differs between the main scanning cross-section and the sub-scanning cross-section (a plane containing the optical axis of the lens and perpendicular to the main scanning plane).
10. An $f\theta$ lens according to Claim 9, wherein with regard to at least one of a curved surface adjacent to the deflection point and a curved surface adjacent to the plane to be scanned, the radius of curvature of the curved surface of the lens determined in a plane containing a normal in the main scanning plane and perpendicular to the main scanning plane varies continuously in the effective portion of the lens.
11. An $f\theta$ lens according to Claim 9 or 10, wherein in the sub-scanning cross-section near the optical axis, the deflection point and the plane to be scanned are in an optically substantially conjugate relation.
12. A scanning optical system comprising a light source, a first optical system for condensing light from the light source and causing the light to emerge toward the deflection point of the deflecting surface of a deflector, a deflector for deflecting the light beam from the first optical system at a uniform angular velocity on the deflection point of the deflecting surface thereof, a second optical system comprising an $f\theta$ lens acting to effect uniform speed scanning while causing the light beam deflected at a uniform angular velocity from the deflection point of the deflector to be imaged on a plane to be scanned, and a plane to be scanned on which a recording material such as a photosensitive member is placed, characterized in that the shape of the curved surface in the main scanning plane of at least the lens surface of the $f\theta$ lens of the second optical system which is adjacent to the deflection point is an aspherical shape and particularly near the optical axis, in at least the main scanning plane, this aspherical shape is convex toward the deflection point, and when the radius of curvature of this convex shape near the optical axis in the main scanning plane is r_1 and the focal length of said $f\theta$ lens near the optical axis in the main scanning plane is f_m ,

$$0 \leq r < |f_m|$$
 and yet, when with the point of intersection between the lens surface adjacent to said deflection point side and the optical axis as the origin, the coordinates system of the x-axis is plotted in the direction of the optical axis and the coordinates system of the y-axis is plotted in the main scanning plane perpendicularly thereto and when the surface shape in the main scanning plane is expressed as a function $S_1(y)$ in which y is a variable and when the maximum effective diameter of said surface in the main scanning plane is Y_{max} , $S_1(y)$ is defined between 0 and Y_{max} , and when $r_1 < Y_{max}$,

$$-1 < S_1(r_1)/r_1 < 0.5$$
 and when $r_1 \geq Y_{max}$,

$$-1 \times Y_{max}/r_1 < S_1(Y_{max})/Y_{max} < 0.5 \times Y_{max}/r_1.$$
13. A scanning optical system according to Claim 12, wherein when the thickness of the $f\theta$ lens of the second optical system on the optical axis thereof is t and the effective scanning width on the plane to be scanned is L ,

$$0 < t/L < 0.08.$$
14. A scanning optical system according to Claim 12, wherein when the thickness of the $f\theta$ lens of the second optical system on the optical axis thereof is t and the distance from the deflection point to the plane to be scanned is g ,

$$0 < t/g < 0.15.$$
15. A scanning optical system according to Claim 12, wherein the focal length f_m of the $f\theta$ lens of the

second optical system near the optical axis in the main scanning plane and the distance g from the deflection point to the plane to be scanned are

$$|f_m|/g > 0.8.$$

5

16. A scanning optical system according to Claim 12, wherein the $f\theta$ lens of the second optical system is an $f\theta$ lens in which the shape of the lens near the optical axis is a meniscus lens convex toward the deflection point side in at least the main scanning plane.

10 17. A scanning optical system according to Claim 12, wherein the light beam emerging from the first optical system is substantially convergent light in at least the main scanning plane.

15 18. A scanning optical system according to Claim 17, wherein the light beam emerging from the first optical system is substantially convergent light in at least the main scanning plane, and the distance p from the deflection point to a point at which said convergent light is imaged in the main scanning plane and the distance g from the deflection point to the plane to be scanned are

$$0.7 < p/g.$$

20 19. A scanning optical system according to Claim 12, wherein the light beam emerging from the first optical system is substantially parallel light in at least the main scanning plane.

25 20. A scanning optical system according to Claim 12, wherein the $f\theta$ lens of the second optical system is an $f\theta$ lens in which with regard to at least one of a curved surface adjacent to the deflection point and a curved surface adjacent to the plane to be scanned, the radius of curvature near the optical axis differs between the main scanning cross-section and the sub-scanning cross-section.

30 21. A scanning optical system according to Claim 20, wherein the $f\theta$ lens of the second optical system is such that with regard to at least one of the curved surface adjacent to the deflection point and the curved surface adjacent to the plane to be scanned, the radius of curvature of the curved surface of the lens determined in a plane containing a normal in the main scanning plane and perpendicular to the main scanning plane varies continuously in the effective portion of the lens.

35 22. A scanning optical system according to Claim 20 or 21, wherein the light beam emerging from the first optical system is condensed substantially on the deflection point of the deflector in the sub-scanning cross-section and yet, the $f\theta$ lens of the second optical system is such that in the sub-scanning cross-section near the optical axis, the deflection point and the plane to be scanned are in an optically substantially conjugate relation.

40 23. A scanning optical system according to any one of Claims 12 to 22, wherein a semiconductor laser is used as the light source.

45 24. An image forming apparatus for effecting image formation by the use of a scanning optical system according to any one of Claims 12 to 23.

45

50

55

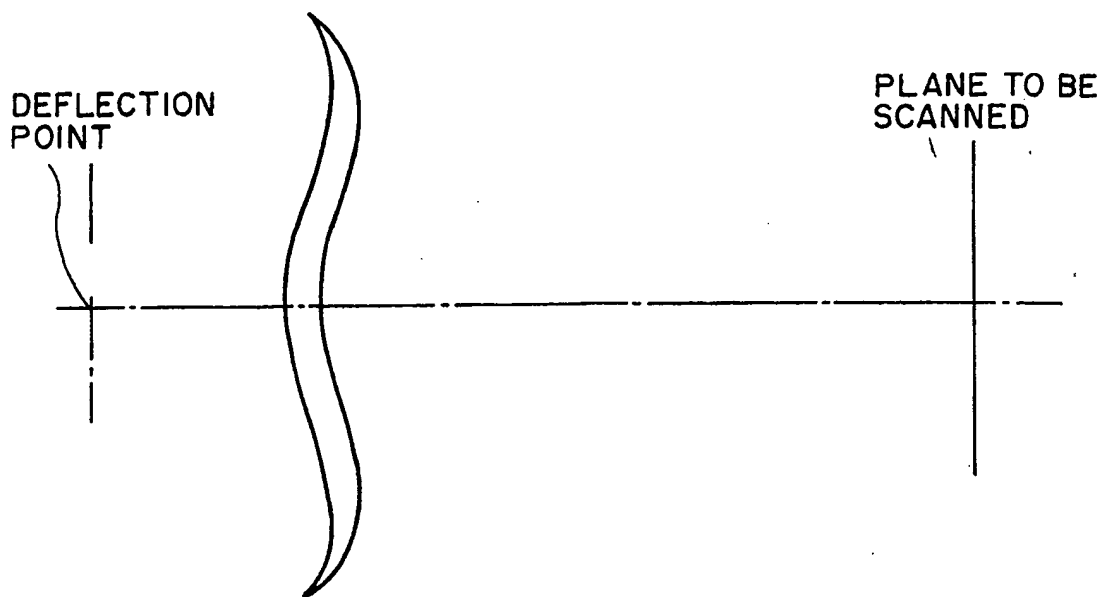


FIG. 1

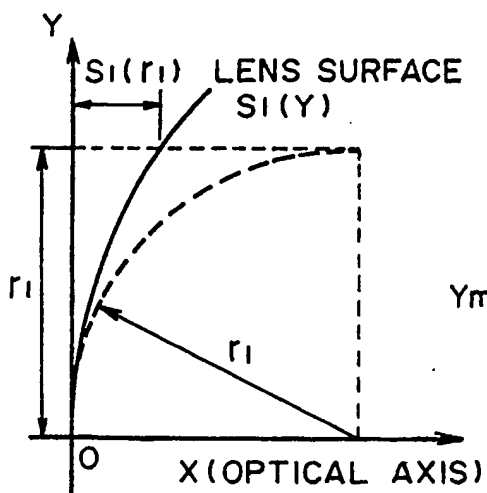


FIG. 2A

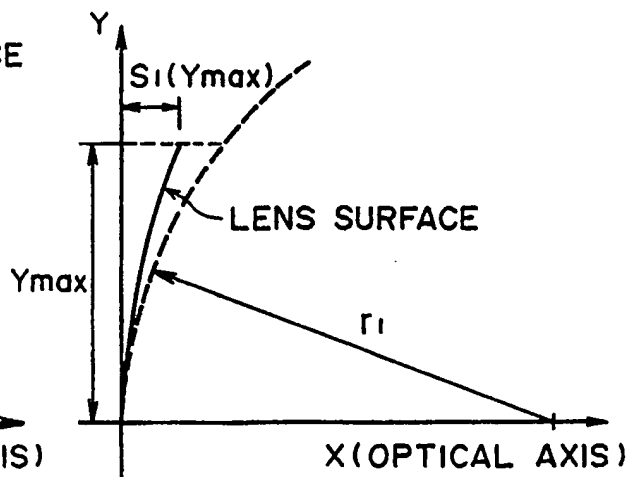


FIG. 2B

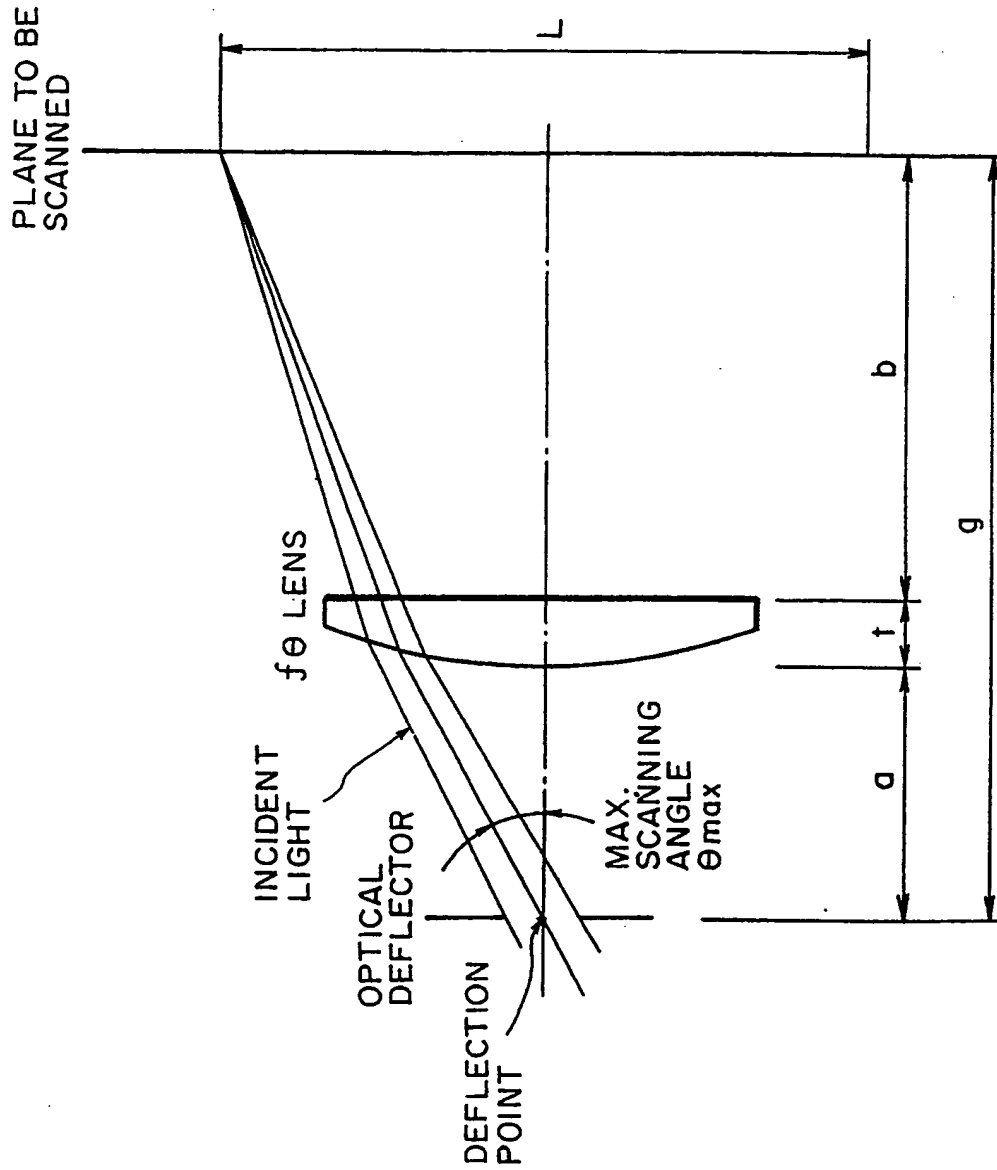


FIG. 3

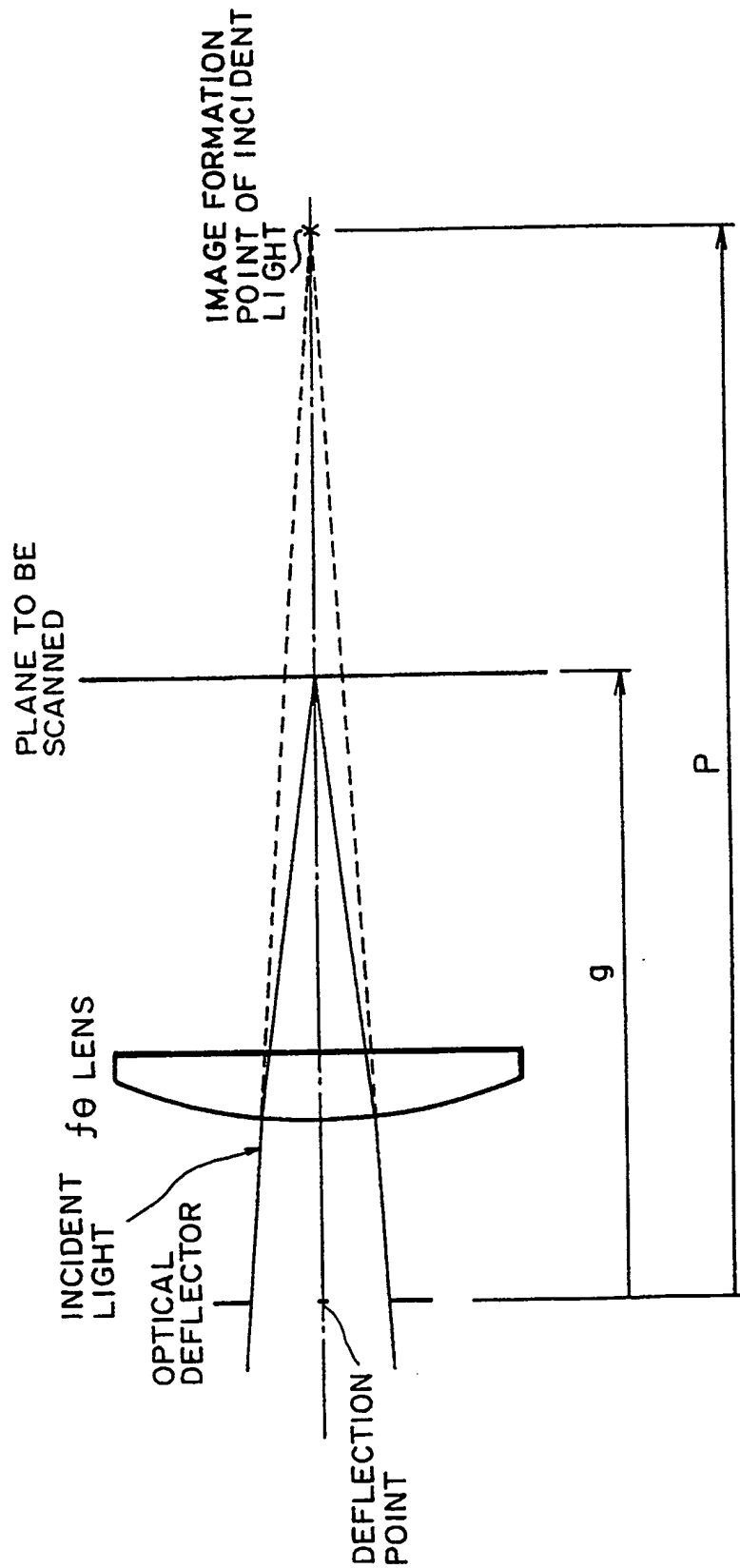


FIG. 4

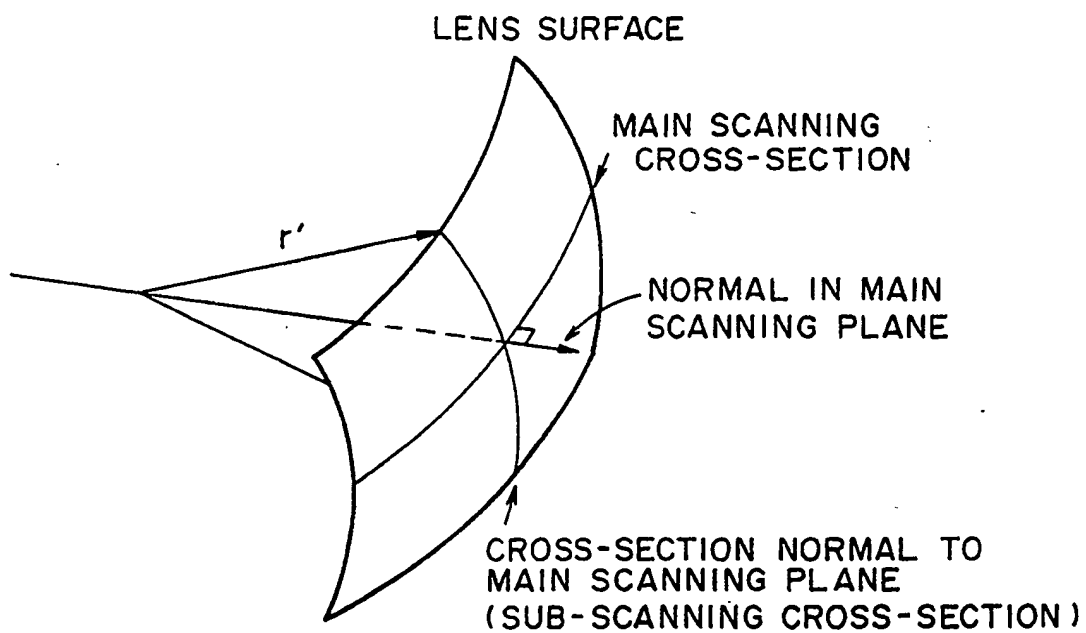


FIG. 5

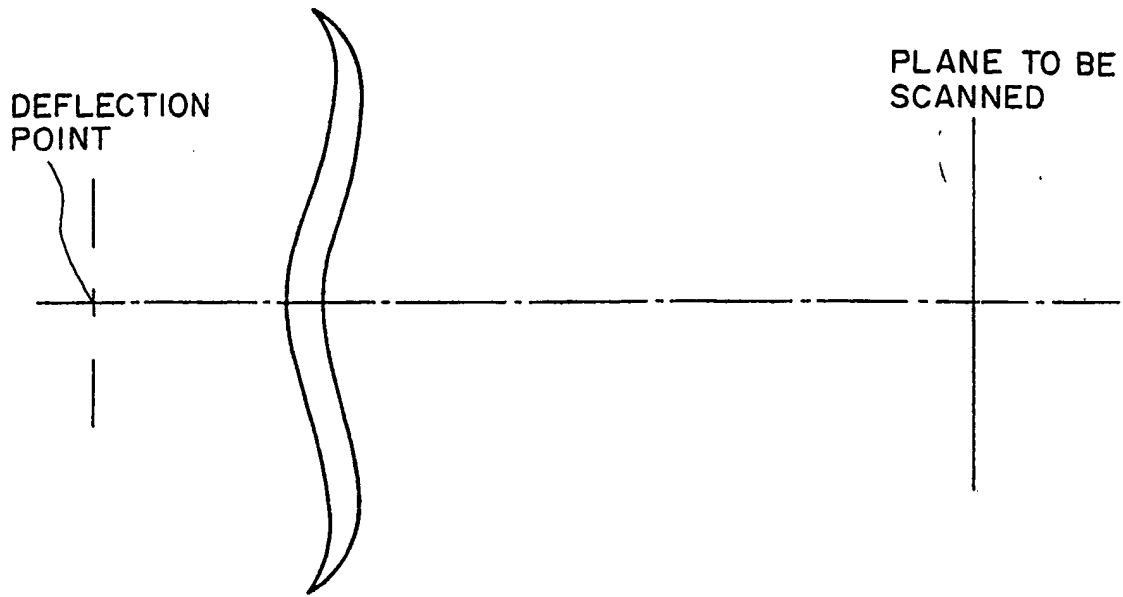


FIG. 6

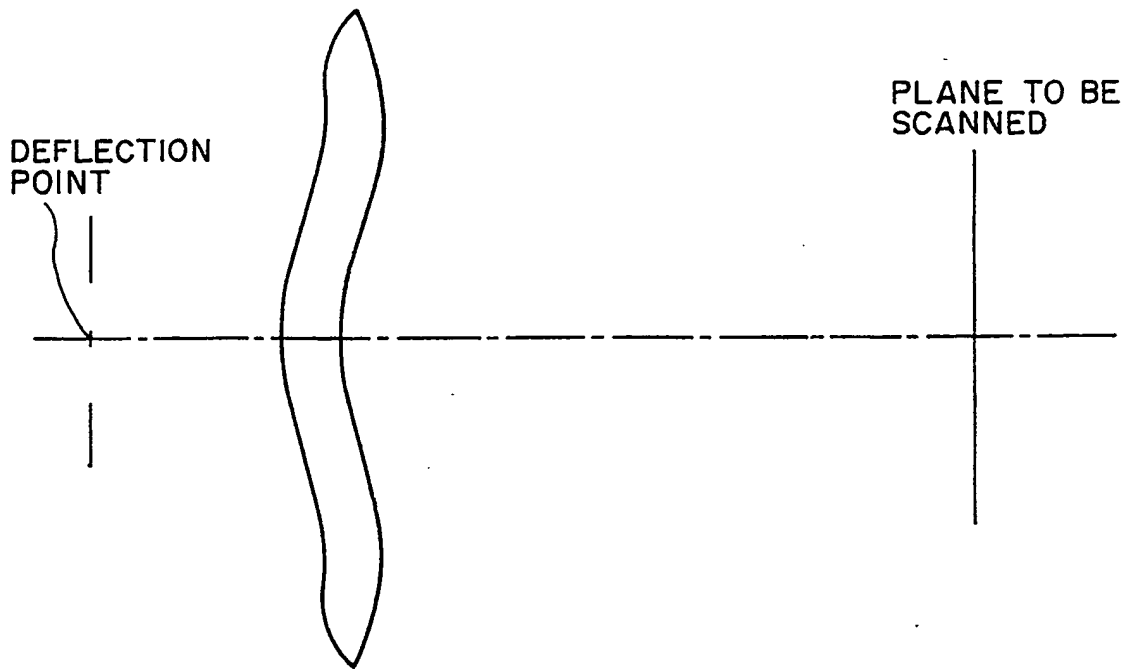


FIG. 7

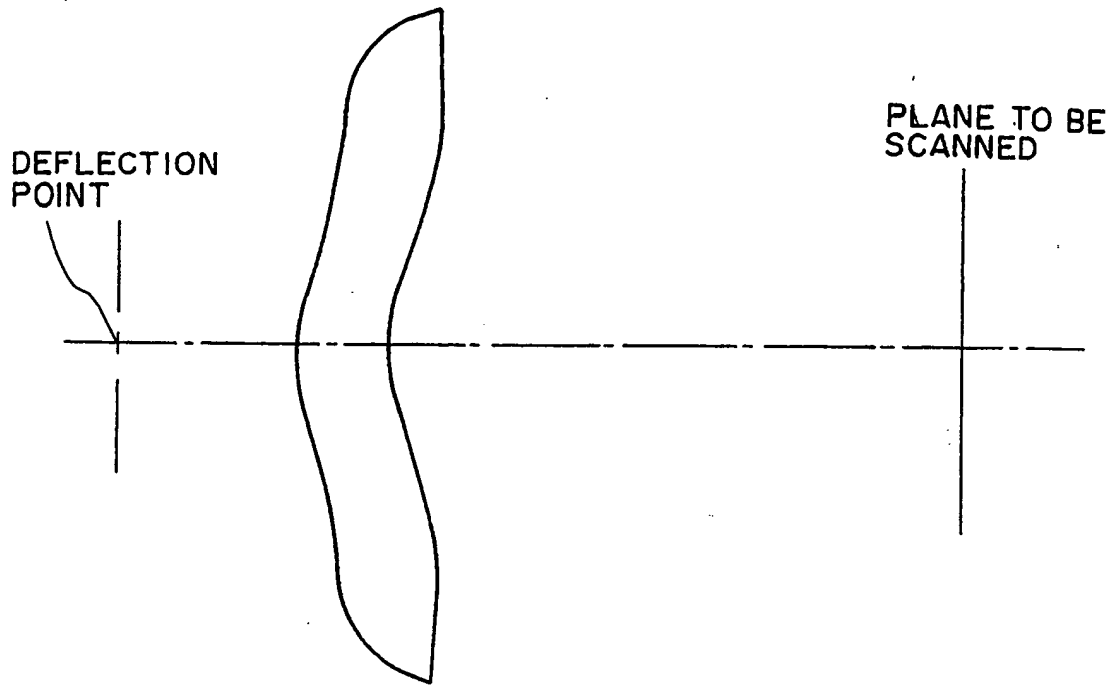


FIG. 8

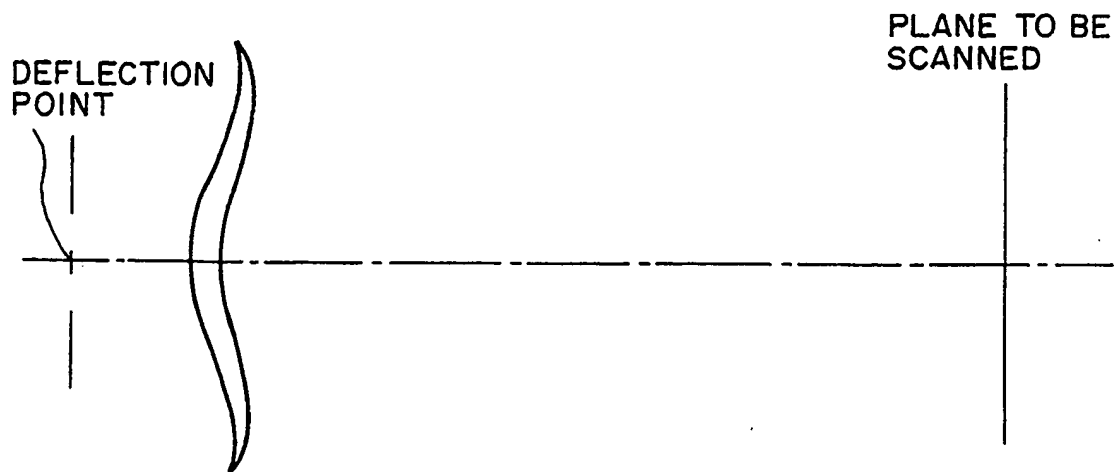


FIG. 9

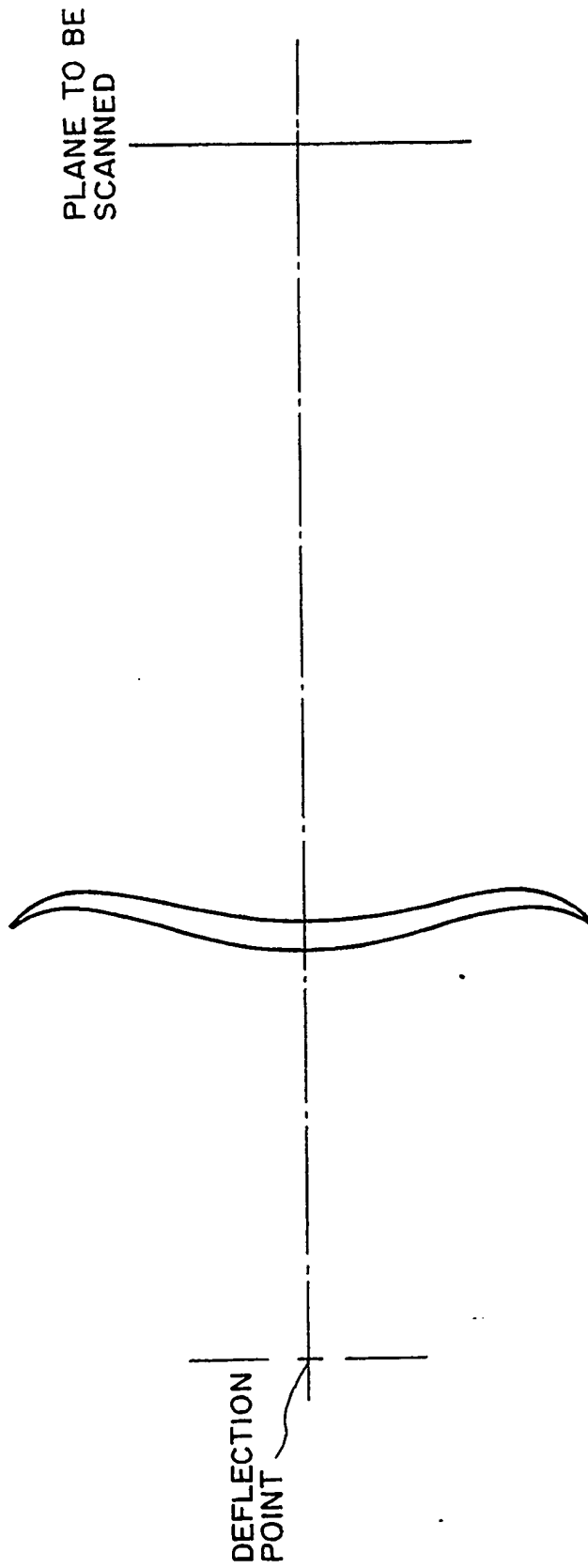


FIG. 10

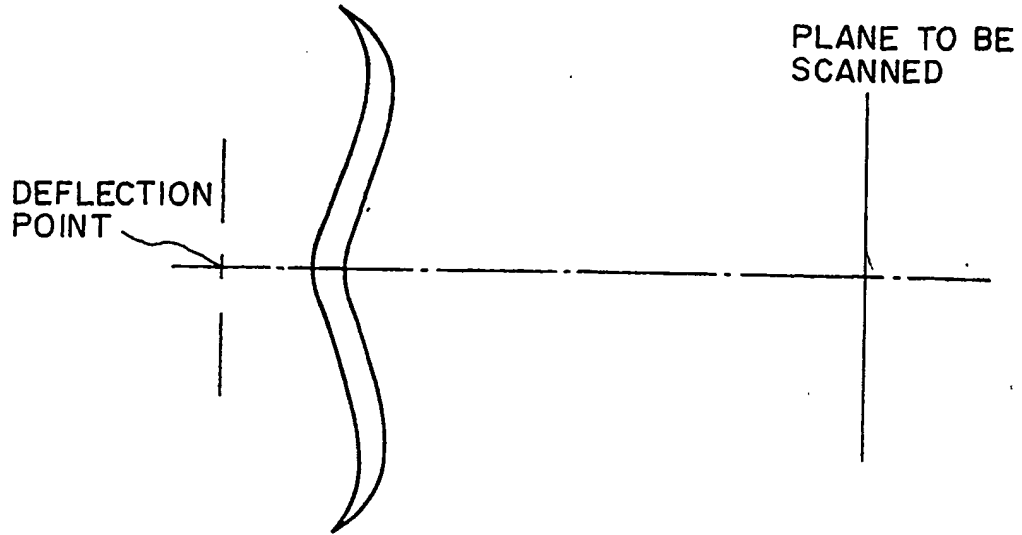


FIG. 11

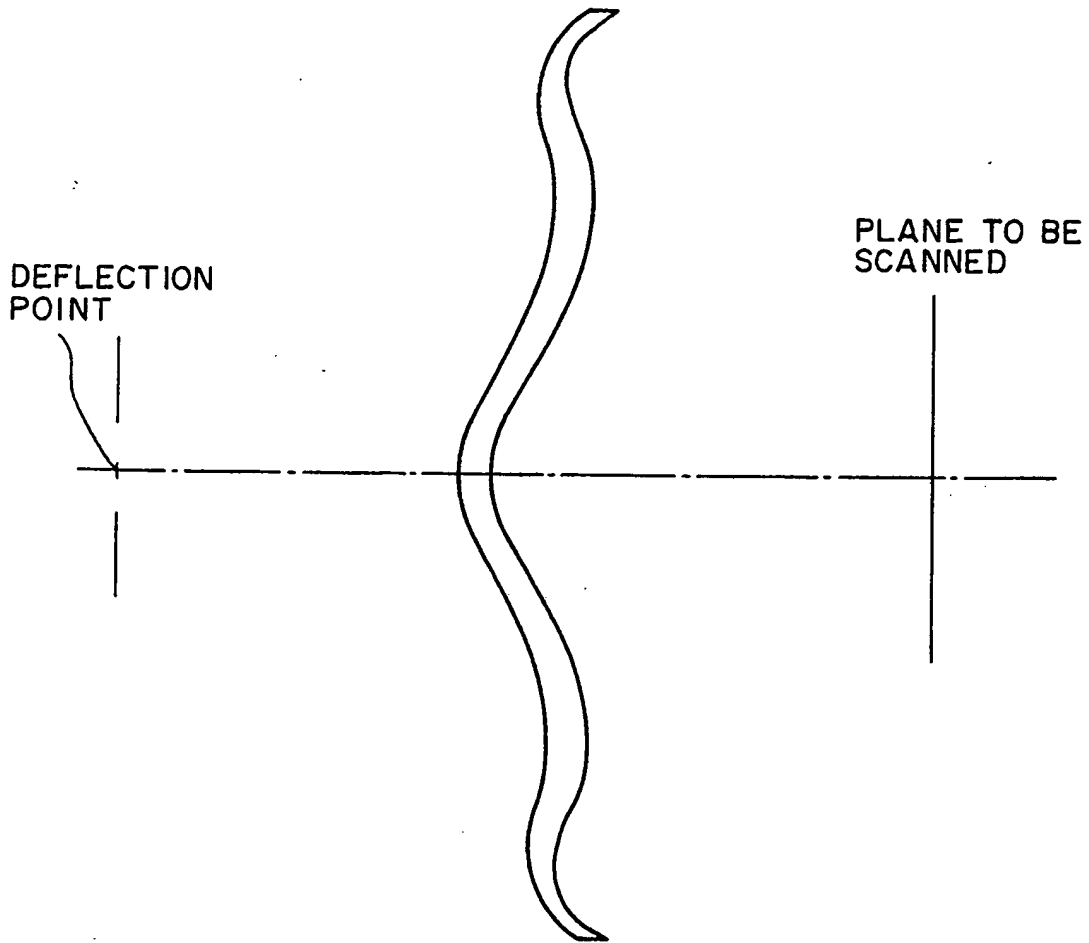


FIG. 12

CURVATURE OF FIELD

CONSTANT SPEED PROPERTY

----- IN MAIN SCANNING PLANE
 ——— IN SUB-SCANNING PLANE

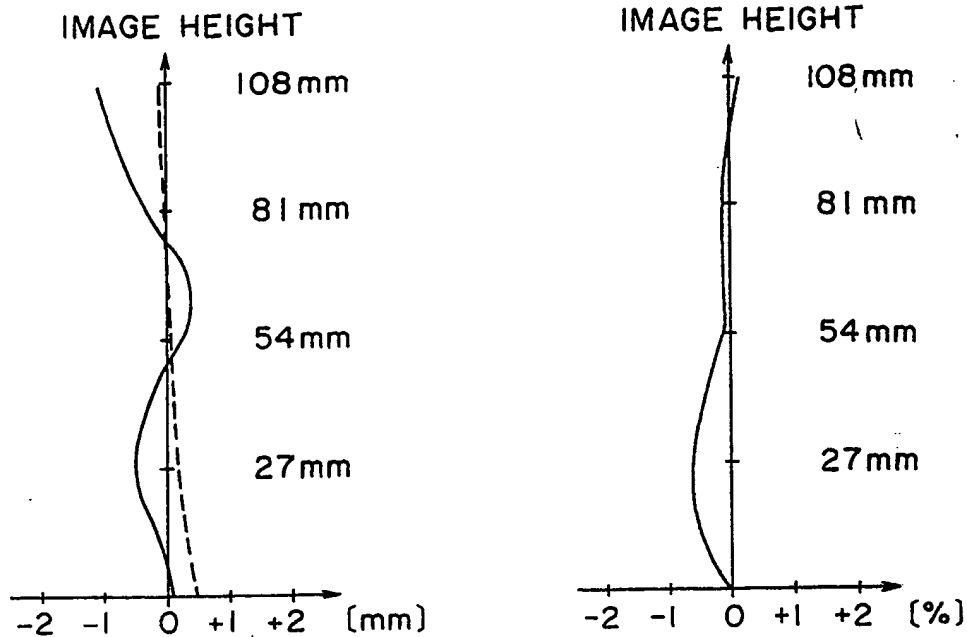


FIG. 13

CURVATURE OF FIELD

CONSTANT SPEED PROPERTY

----- IN MAIN SCANNING PLANE
 ——— IN SUB-SCANNING PLANE

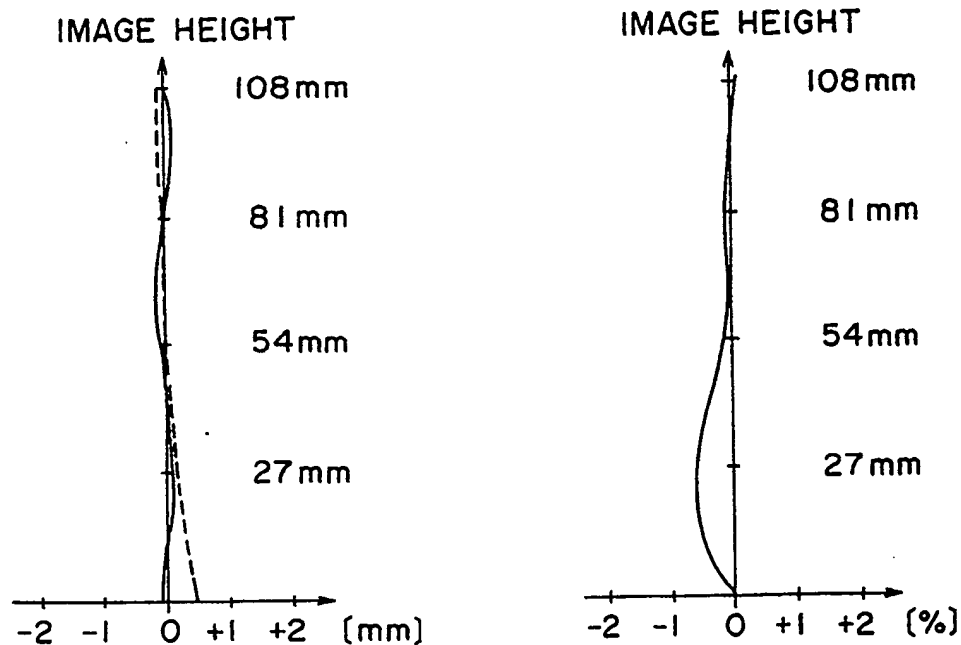


FIG. 14

CURVATURE OF FIELD

CONSTANT SPEED PROPERTY

----- IN MAIN SCANNING PLANE
 ——— IN SUB-SCANNING PLANE

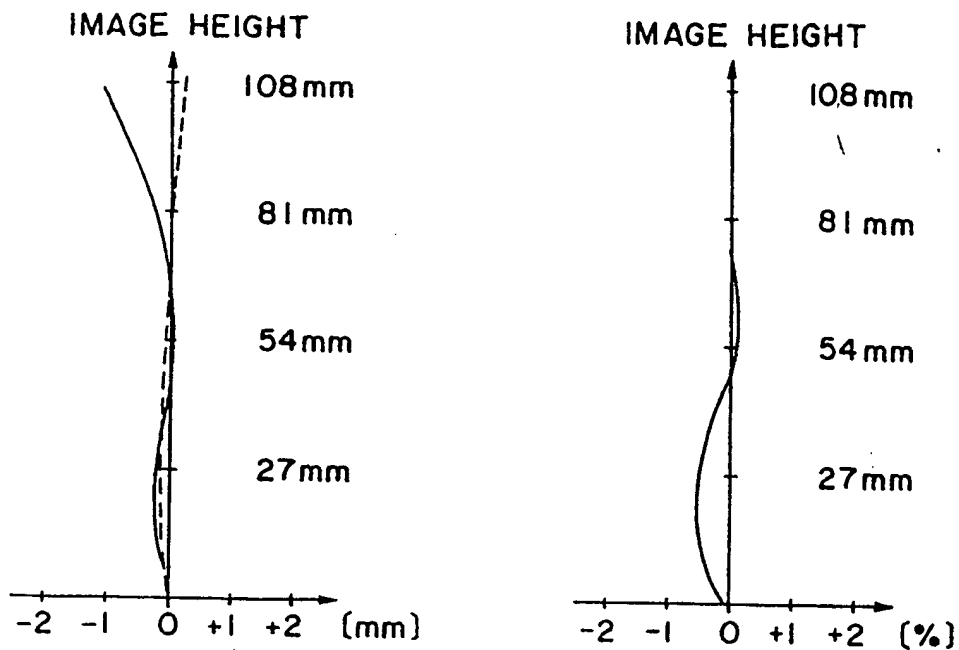


FIG. 15

CURVATURE OF FIELD

CONSTANT SPEED PROPERTY

----- IN MAIN SCANNING PLANE
 ——— IN SUB-SCANNING PLANE

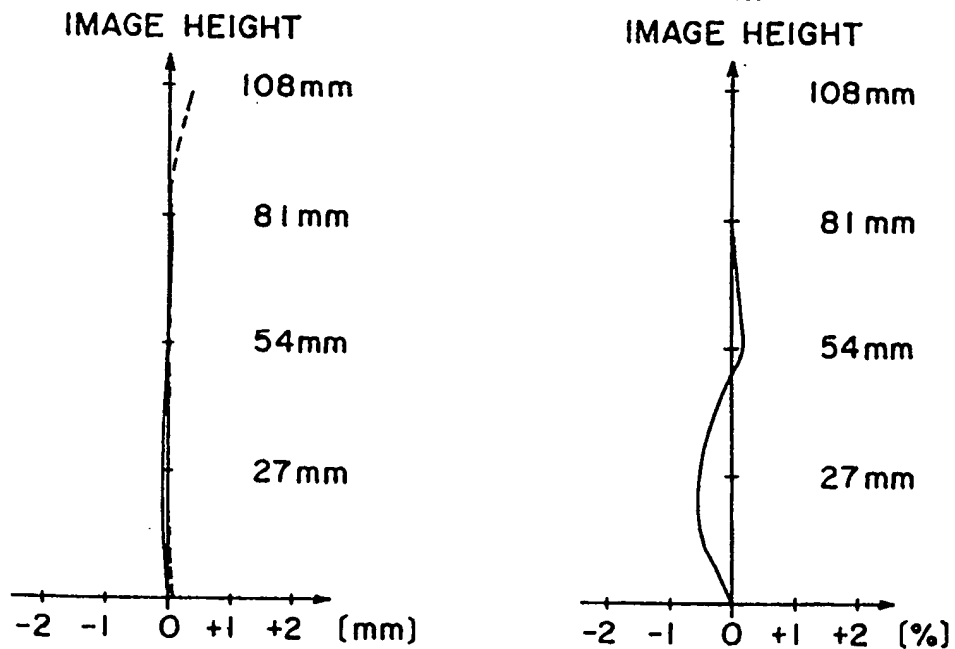


FIG. 16

CURVATURE OF FIELD

CONSTANT SPEED PROPERTY

----- IN MAIN SCANNING PLANE
 ——— IN SUB-SCANNING PLANE

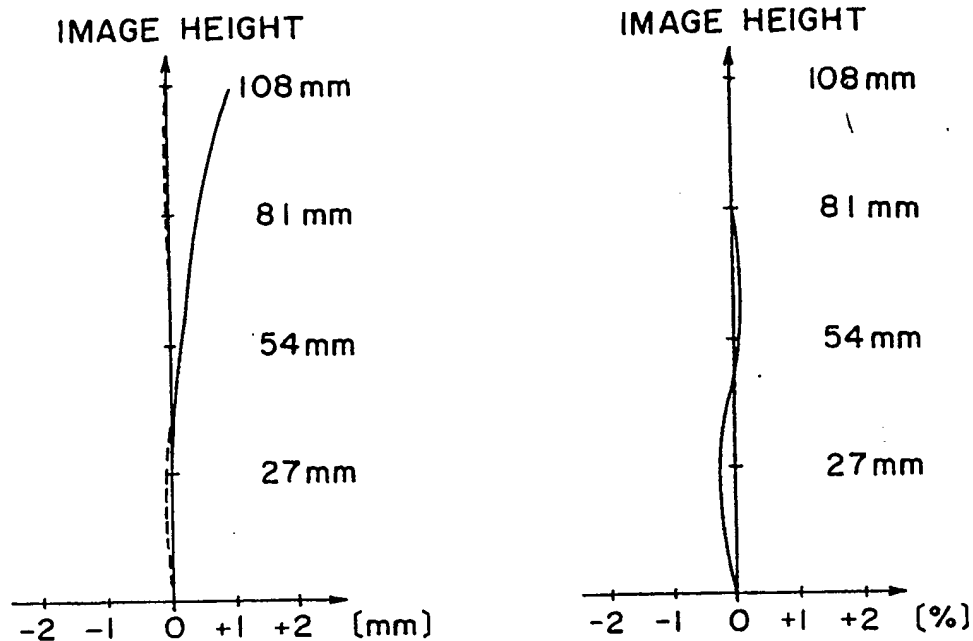


FIG. 17

CURVATURE OF FIELD

CONSTANT SPEED PROPERTY

----- IN MAIN SCANNING PLANE
 ——— IN SUB-SCANNING PLANE

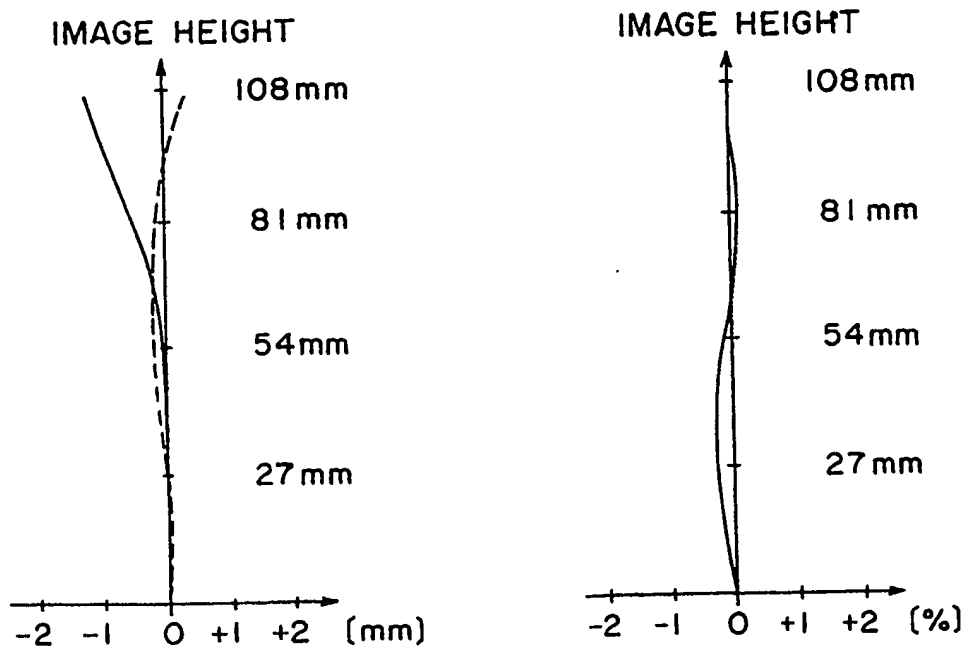


FIG. 18

CURVATURE OF FIELD

CONSTANT SPEED PROPERTY

----- IN MAIN SCANNING PLANE
 ——— IN SUB-SCANNING PLANE

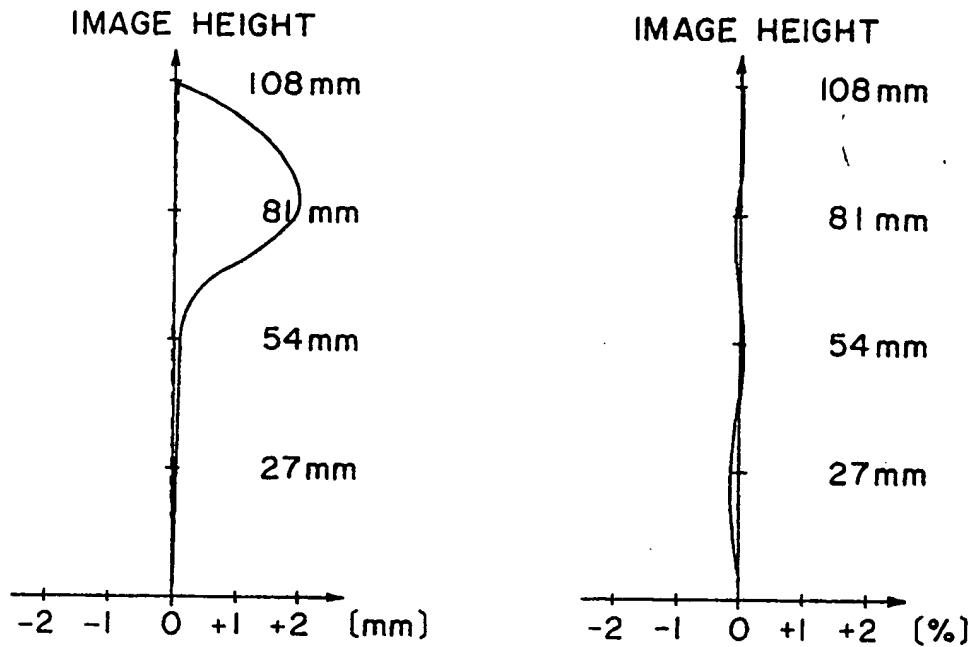


FIG. 19

CURVATURE OF FIELD

CONSTANT SPEED PROPERTY

----- IN MAIN SCANNING PLANE
 ——— IN SUB-SCANNING PLANE

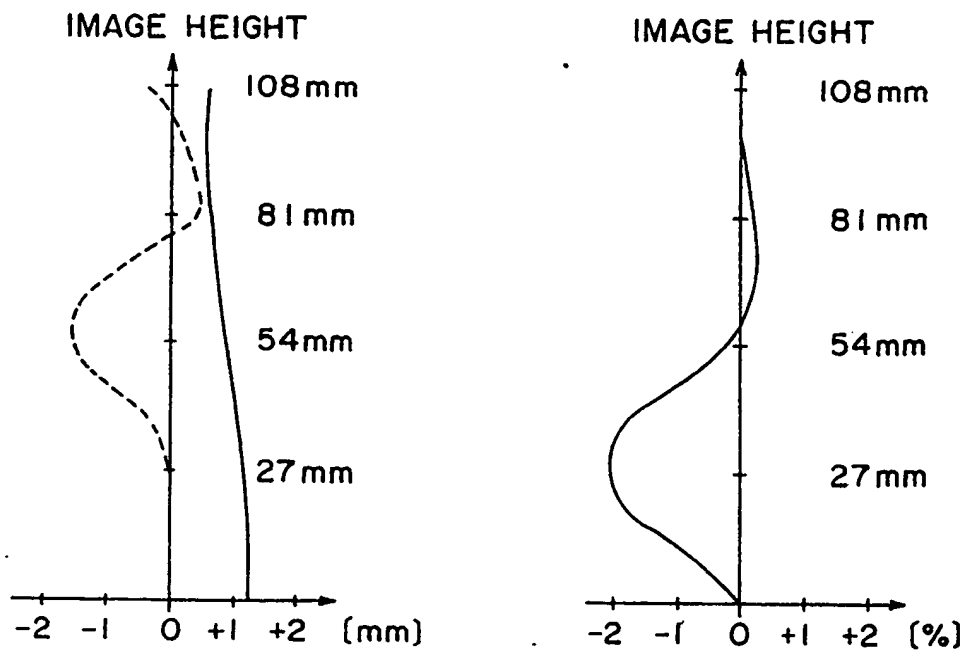


FIG. 20

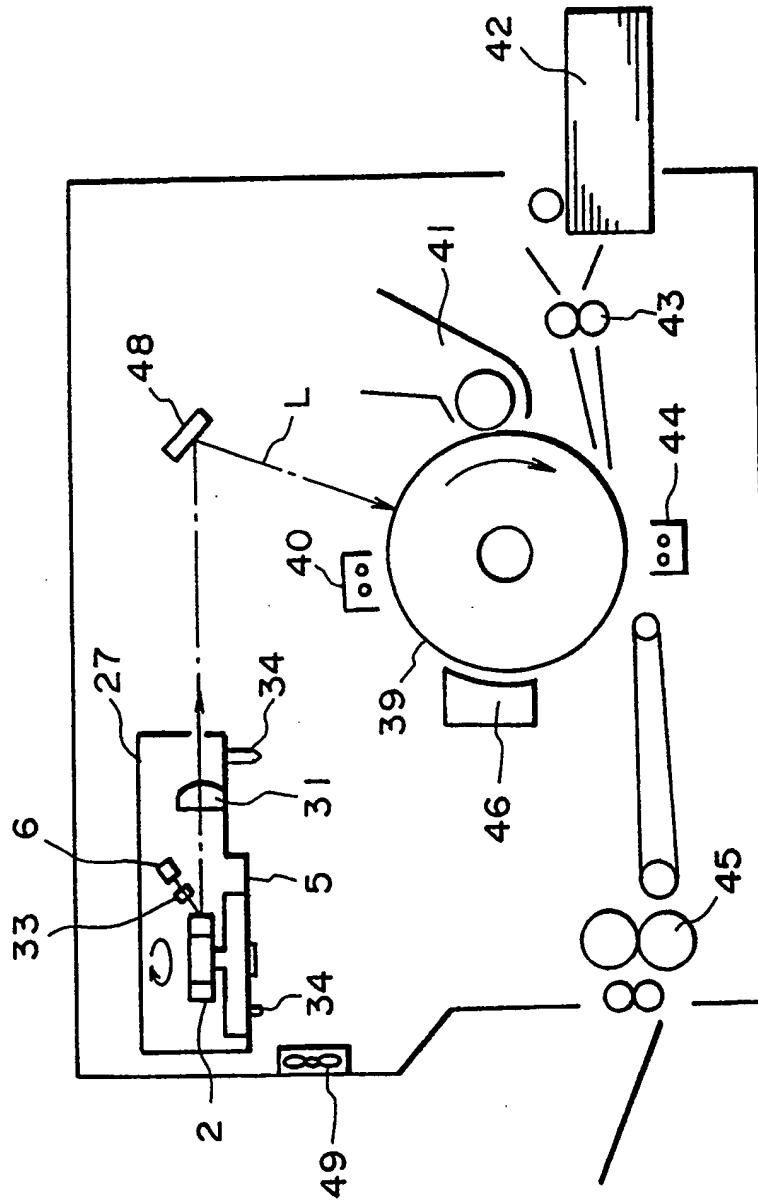


FIG. 21